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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 001387

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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/PASCUAL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/31/2018
TAGS: [KWBG IS PGOV PTER](#)
SUBJECT: TENSION CONTINUES IN GAZA AS HAMAS CLAIMS
CRACKDOWN FINISHED

REF: JERUSALEM 1361

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary. Tensions remain high in Gaza City following the multiple bombings on July 25, and subsequent Hamas crackdown. Hamas leaders told press July 31 that closed NGOs will be permitted to reopen, but Fatah and independent officials are skeptical and say Hamas gunmen used the crackdown to consolidate power. Gaza Governor Muhammad al-Qidwa told PolOff July 30 that Hamas' accusations against Fatah are "pure lies" and a pretext to eliminate Fatah's remaining Gaza Strip leadership. A standoff continues between Hamas forces and the Hillis clan, which has been accused of sheltering suspects in the bombings. An Army of Islam statement condemned "baseless" Hamas accusations of its involvement in the bombing attacks, while Fatah spokesmen told press July 30 that the attacks were carried out by Hamas as part of an internal feud, and are indicative of Hamas' "disarray and indiscipline." End summary.

Hamas Claims to Ease Crackdown;
Tensions Still High in Gaza City

12. (SBU) The Hamas "Interior Ministry" in Gaza City told press July 31 that NGOs and local authorities closed by Hamas July 26-30 will be permitted to reopen as long as they refrain from "corrupt activities." (Note: Fatah contacts told PolOff and POL FSN that Hamas security forces have raided at least 160 NGOs in the Gaza Strip since July 25. End note). Tensions remain high in Gaza City's Shuja'iya neighborhood, where unknown attackers detonated an IED near Hamas police late July 30, and Hamas is pressuring the Hillis clan to hand over weapons, explosive and suspects in the July 25 bombings. (Note: the Hillis clan is led by Ahmad Hillis, nominally a Fatah official, but allied with Hamas since the June 2007 Hamas takeover of Gaza. Hillis and Fatah PLC member Muhammad Dahlan are bitter rivals. End note). Former Hamas Interior Minister Sa'id Siyam told press that Hamas will soon reveal the identities of the bombing perpetrators, who have "confessed to these crimes."

Gaza Governor: Hamas Accusations Are
"Pure Lies," Pretext to Attack Fatah

13. (C) Gaza Governor Muhammad al-Qidwa told PolOff by phone July 30 that Hamas accusations of Fatah involvement in the July 25 bombings are "pure lies" and a pretext to eliminate Fatah's remaining Gaza Strip leadership. He said Hamas rejected calls for an independent investigative commission, refused to release any evidence that indicates Fatah involvement and is not serious about investigating whether internal Hamas divisions led to the attacks. Al-Qidwa said there are still tensions between Hamas and elements of the Hillis clan, but fighting has stopped.

14. (C) Al-Qidwa added that Hamas gunmen took over his Gaza City offices and confiscated equipment and documents under the guise of "protecting" the site. He said Hamas security officers arrested one of his media department employees and harassed other staff. He said Hamas has no respect for PA Governors or non-Hamas officials.

Hamas Pressures Hillis Clan,
But Clan Rejects Accusations

15. (SBU) Hillis clan leaders released a July 30 statement denying it is sheltering any criminals or non-clan members. The statement said the clan is "against killings and explosions, which are condemned by all religions, perspectives and morals. We have no interest in actions that could harm the Palestinian people and will not harbor those who carry out actions contrary to public order."

"Army of Islam" Also Denies
Part in July 25 Bombings

16. (SBU) An Army of Islam outlet released a statement on July 29 condemning "baseless" Hamas accusations of their involvement in the July 25 bombing attacks, and labeled Hamas' subsequent crackdown an "exploitation of the bombing for its hidden intentions to impose power over the people." The statement denied any Army of Islam connection with Fatah and called the attack an outside attempt to sow discord between Muslim groups. (Note: A Hamas policeman was killed

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and five Army of Islam gunmen injured in July 27 gunbattles in southern Gaza City. While tensions remain high, there has not been further violence between Hamas and the Army of Islam as of 1400 local on July 31. End note).

Fatah Spokesman: Later Blast
Demonstrates Internal Hamas Feud

17. (U) Ramallah-based Fatah spokesman Fahmi al-Za'arir told local press July 30 that the July 25 bombing attacks were carried out by Hamas as part of an internal feud and indicate Hamas' "disarray and indiscipline." He said a subsequent explosion at a Hamas training center in Khan Yunis late July 29, which injured six al-Qassam Brigades members, is evidence of ongoing Hamas infighting.

Fatah-Splinter Militia Says Hamas
Kidnapped Its Members, Seized Weapons

18. (SBU) A spokesman for the Abu al-Rish Brigades, a militant, Gaza-based Fatah-splinter group, told local press July 30 that Hamas Executive Force gunmen arrested several Abu al-Rish fighters and confiscated rifles, ammunition and rocket launchers from the group. (Note: the Abu al-Rish Brigades conduct sporadic rocket, mortar and shooting attacks against Israel, and have not had significant previous problems with Hamas. End note).

Fatah Figures Cite Hamas Looting,
Targeting of Religious Figures

19. (SBU) Fatah contacts told PolOff and POL FSN that Hamas raids have included looting of Fatah leaders' personal belongings and intimidation of several Fatah- or PA-affiliated imams. Contacts report that gunmen raided the Gaza City residence of PLO National Council Speaker Salim al-Zanun and looted its furnishings July 28. Contacts report that Hamas gunmen also fired at former PA Islamic Waqf Minister Yusif Salamah's house in al-Maghazi Refugee Camp

July 28 and warned him to stay away from the Camp's main mosque.

Senior PLO Leader: Prospects for National
Dialogue "Dead" After Hamas Crackdown

¶10. (C) PLO Executive Committee (ExComm) member Riyadh al-Khudari told PolOff by phone July 30 that prospects for productive PLO-Hamas dialogue are "dead" after Hamas' crackdown on Fatah and PLO leaders and offices. He said Hamas refuses to return his ID card or that of fellow Gaza ExComm member Zakariya al-Agha unless they sign a commitment to obtain Hamas clearance before they travel, which al-Khudari said neither will ever sign.

Comment

¶11. (C) Recent developments reinforce our view, per reftel, that this latest round of violence is rooted in rivalries within the Hamas camp. The Hillis clan--allied with Hamas since the June 2007 coup--is emerging as a prime suspect in the July 25 bombings.

WALLES